

Mere Rural Sanitary Authority.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

To the Chairman and Members of the Mere District Council.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honour to lay before you my report as Medical Officer of Health, for the year ending December 31st, 1909.

DEATHS.

During the year 1909 the deaths registered in the district numbered 60, a decrease of 11 on last year. These show a death-rate of 12.5 per 1,000 population, calculated on the census estimated at the middle of the year. The death-rate for the whole of England and Wales for the year 1909 was 14.5. Of the deaths four were of children under one year of age, equal to an annual death-rate of 44.9 per 1,000 births (England and Wales 109). 31 deaths were of persons 65 years of age and upwards—one being 101 years. According to the quarters of the year, the deaths were as follows:—

First Quarter	...	...	...	20
Second „	...	...	...	18
Third „	...	...	...	8
Fourth „	...	...	...	14
				—
				60

There were 38 deaths of males and 22 of females.

BIRTHS.

The number of births registered in the district during the year was 89, a decrease of 10 on last year. This is the lowest number recorded for many years, the average for the last ten years being 120. This number is equal to an annual birth-rate of 18.6 per 1,000 population. The birth-rate for the whole of England and Wales for the same period was 25.6. 49 of the births were of males and 40 of females.

MORTALITY FROM CERTAIN DISEASES.

Of the deaths classified according to their causes seven were due to phthisis, six to other diseases of the lungs, and 12 to heart disease. Six deaths were attributed to cancer, and four to accidents. There were no deaths from any of the zymotic diseases.

ZYMOTIC DISEASES.

During the past year the district has been free from any general outbreak of infectious disease. Under the Notification Act five cases of

diphtheria have been reported, 10 of scarlatina, two of erysipelas, and two of enteric fever.

SCARLATINA.

Isolated cases of scarlatina have been reported from various parts of the district during the year, and would not merit special consideration but for the case in the parish of Sedgehill, which was reported to me on June 22nd. On visiting the premises, I ascertained that the father of the child affected worked at Redhouse Farm, Sedgehill, where he daily milked a few cows and drove the milk cart for Messrs. Harrison and Bishop, whose milk was sent to London per the Salisbury Semley and Gillingham Dairy Company from Semley Station. It was also reported to me that a serious outbreak of scarlatina in Chelsea, Wandsworth, Kingston-on-Thames, and other parts of Surrey, was attributed to infection carried in the milk from the above farm. A local inquiry had been held by the Medical Officer of Health for Surrey on June 20th, which I had been unable to attend, not having had sufficient notice. From inquiries made during my visit on June 22nd I was informed that the child was taken ill on the 15th, and was considered to be suffering from German measles. Two older children in the house were said to have had a similar complaint. The father ceased milking at the time the case reported to me as scarlatina was taken ill. After careful inquiries into all the circumstances of the case I was of opinion that the man came to the farm in the morning, straight from the house in which one or more of the children were desquamating after scarlatina, and without washing his hands, milked some of the cows at Redhouse Farm, by this means conveying infection to the milk. I did not consider that the man suffered from the disease himself, nor did I believe that the udders of the cows were the source of infection. My reasons for doubting the latter view were as follows. Having been Medical Officer of Health in a dairy district for many years I have inquired into several outbreaks of scarlatina, and have never had reason to suspect the cows in the locality as the source of infection. If cows suffered from any disease, capable of communicating scarlatina to human beings, it must be more or less infectious from cow to cow, and as dairy farmers are constantly buying cows from other dairies the disease could scarcely fail to be common in a dairy country, and as such, a source of infection to the milkers and their families. This is not the case. Again, veterinary surgeons practising in dairy districts could scarcely fail to recognise a disease in the cows of such a serious nature, but as far as I can ascertain, no such disease is known by the local veterinary surgeons. That it is an easy matter to convey the infection of scarlatina to milk in the manner I have suggested above I know from personal observation in a similar case I inquired into some years ago, and I am of opinion that if proper care was taken to see that milkers thoroughly washed their hands before commencing their work the risk of infecting milk with scarlatina would be considerably diminished.

Immediately the case was reported the following precautions were taken. The infected household was isolated and supplied with disinfectants, the sale of milk from the infected farm was forbidden, the farm buildings were cleansed and

white-washed, and all the utensils used at the farm were thoroughly cleaned. The cows were also inspected by a veterinary surgeon. Three other cases of scarlatina occurred in the locality of the original case and every precaution was taken to prevent the disease from spreading. No cases were reported after August 20th.

In September a case of scarlatina occurred at Maiden Bradley, and two more cases were reported before the end of the year. The disease was of a very mild type, and precautions are being taken to prevent it from spreading.

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF DISTRICT AND CHIEF OCCUPATIONS OF INHABITANTS.

Mentioned in former reports.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.

During the past year there has been no important alteration in the house accommodation in the district. Three new houses have been erected, and two closed as unfit for habitation. As a rule the cottages of the working classes are kept in good repair, and are provided with an ample amount of open space about them. No action under Parts 1, 2, and 3 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act has been taken or needed.

WATER SUPPLY OF THE DISTRICT.

During the month of September, the water-works at Mere, which I mentioned in my former report as in course of construction, were completed. They consist of a well in the centre of a field at Burton (an outlying portion of Mere), a pumping station with double engines and pumps over the well. A main laid from thence to a reservoir situated on Mere downs, the reservoir constructed of concrete and capable of containing 100,000 gallons of water, and of mains laid to the various parts of the parish of Mere. The water was turned on to the mains and was available for public use by the end of September. Having such a satisfactory supply of pure water provided for their use I trust the inhabitants of Mere will cease to use the water from shallow wells and dipping places for drinking purposes, as these sources are always liable to contamination in a closely populated district. At the end of the year water-mains were being laid from the Mere waterworks to the village of West Knoyle, with a view of supplying the inhabitants with water.

During the month of July I made a careful examination of the water supply of Sedgehill and reported the same to your Council, who immediately took steps to ascertain how best the village could obtain a proper water supply. At the end of the year two schemes were receiving your consideration, and I trust in my next report to be able to give details of the scheme selected.

The water supply in the other parts of the district has been satisfactory, and I have had no complaint of scarcity or impurity from any other village.

MILK SUPPLY AND PRODUCTION IN THE DISTRICT.

During the past year careful supervision has been maintained over the cowsheds and dairies in the district, and the by-laws have been en-

forced where necessary. A large number of cow-sheds have been carefully inspected, and orders made to remedy any defects or breaches of the by-laws discovered. In Sedgehill, where all the dairies were inspected, the absence of a proper water supply was very apparent, and is commented on in my special report. This will be altered in the coming year. The production and handling of the milk sent to London and elsewhere has been supervised, and precautions taken as far as possible to prevent it being contaminated with the germs of infectious diseases. I would again point out the importance of thorough washing of hands by milkers before commencing their work. The regular white-washing of the cowsheds has been attended to, and where considered necessary they have been carefully disinfected by your Sanitary Officer.

OTHER FOODS INSPECTION, etc.

The slaughter houses in the district, two in number, have been inspected, and the premises where meat is exposed for sale have received attention. No meat intended for human consumption has been condemned as unsound owing to tuberculosis or other causes. No action under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act has been taken or needed, nor any action under Section 117 of the Public Health Act, 1875.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

In the only parts of the district where there are any general systems of sewerage, the arrangements have been satisfactory. In Mere, the laying of pipes for the water supply laid bare and in places damaged the town sewers, but in all cases your Inspector saw that the damage was made good by the contractor. A new sewer was laid in that part of Mere from whence the supply of water is obtained, and in other parts of the town, new drains were laid where the old ones were damaged, or interfered owing to their position with the laying of the water mains. During the summer I visited and examined the sewerage works at Mere, and found the process of filtration working satisfactorily.

POLLUTION OF RIVERS AND STREAMS.

In the month of July, with the assistance of the Sanitary Inspector, I examined the stream flowing through Mere from its source to Edge Bridge. I found no sewage flowing into the stream at any point. The bed of the river was overgrown with weeds through its whole course, and the work of clearing it was carried out under your direction.

EXCREMENT DISPOSAL.

With few exceptions the disposal of excrement in the district is carried out by the householders, who use pail closets or cess-pits, which are periodically emptied, and the contents disposed of on the land. As most of the cottages have good garden accommodation this can be done without danger to the health of the community. The chief danger is that the pails and pits may be allowed to remain too long without attention, and constant supervision is required by your Inspector to see that proper care is taken in the matter. During the year seven additional privies were provided, nine converted to w.c.'s, seven to pail closets and eleven repaired.

REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL OF HOUSE REFUSE.

This is carried out by the occupiers, and in this district presents no difficulties. In 41 cases accumulations of offensive refuse were removed by order of your authority, consisting chiefly of manure, decaying vegetable matter, and other substances whose presence was considered a nuisance or dangerous to health.

NUISANCES.

Forty-five notices have been served during the year for the abatement of nuisances, and all have been complied with.

SCHOOLS, SANITARY CONDITION, etc.

The public elementary schools in the district have been inspected during the year and the sanitary arrangements and water supplies have received attention. In all cases these have been considered satisfactory. It has not been thought necessary to close any elementary school in the district on account of infectious diseases, but in certain cases the children in the locality of the outbreak have been excluded for a time, especially where the parents are employed as milkers. The medical inspection of school children has been carried out by special officers appointed for that purpose.

METHODS OF DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The notification of infectious diseases has been promptly carried out during the year. Seventy cases, including one of tuberculosis, have been reported to me. There being no isolation hospital available, the cases are isolated, as far as possible, in their own homes, and disinfectants are supplied by your authority. In every case, at such time as danger of infection is considered to be past, the houses are disinfected by your Sanitary Inspector at the expense of the District Council.

METHODS OF CONTROL OF TUBERCULOSIS.

The notification of cases of tuberculosis is compulsory on medical men if occurring in their patients under the poor law, and I received one notification. This patient was removed to a hospital for consumption outside the district. There is no hospital accommodation for cases of pulmonary tuberculosis in the district. In some of the dairies in the district sending milk to London the cows were inspected during the summer, by a veterinary inspector, and those found to be suffering from tuberculosis were forbidden to be used for supplying milk, and ordered to be removed from the stalls where the healthy cows were kept.

With the assistance of the Sanitary Inspector, I have made systematic inspections of the district, and am pleased to report that the general sanitary condition is satisfactory.

Trusting you will consider this report for the past year satisfactory,

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
B. POPE BARTLETT,
Medical Officer of Health.

Bourton, February 18, 1910.

TABLE I.

Area of District in acres
(exclusive of area covered by water.) } 31,091

Total population at all ages 5,210
 Number of inhabited houses 1,258 }
 Average number of persons per house 4.14 }
 At Census of 1901.

TABLE III.

TABLE OF DEATHS IN THE PARISHES

TABLE III.

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year 1909.

Notifiable Disease.	Cases Notified in whole District.					Total Cases Notified in Each Locality.	
	At Ages—Years.						
	At all Ages.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.		
Small-pox						Kilmington.	
Cholera	...					East and West Knoyle.	
Diphtheria	..	5	2	1	2	Kingston and Monkt'n Deverill	
Membranous croup	...					Maiden Bradley.	
Erysipelas	...	2				Mere and Zeals.	
Scarlet fever	...	10	1	8	1	Sedgehill.	
Typhus fever	...	2				Stourton.	
Enteric fever	...						
Relapsing fever	...						
Continued fever	...						
Puerperal fever	...						
Tuberculosis	...	1	1				
Totals	...	20	1	11	4	4	
						3	
						3	
						2	
						1	

TABLE IV.
Causes of, and Ages at, Death during Year 1909.

Causes of Death.	Deaths in whole District at subjoined ages.						Deaths in Localities (at all ages).							
	All ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.	Kilmington.	East and West Knoyle.	Kingston & Monkton Deverill.	Maiden Bradley.	Mere and Zeals.	Sedgehill.	Stourton.	Deaths in Public Institutions.
Small-pox ...														
Measles ...														
Scarlet Fever ..														
Whooping-cough														
Diphtheria and membranous croup	mem-													
Croup ..														
Fever { Typhus														
Fever { Enteric														
{ Other continued														
Epidemic influenza														
Cholera ...														
Plague ..														
Diarrhoea ..														
Enteritis ...														
Puerperal fever														
Erysipelas ...														
Other septic diseases ...														
Phthisis	7													
Other tubercular diseases	1													
Cancer, malignant disease	6													
Bronchitis ...	2													
Pneumonia ...	3													
Pleurisy ...	1													
Other diseases of Respiratory organs														
Alcoholism ...														
Cirrhosis of Liver } ...														
Venereal diseases ...														
Premature birth ...														
Diseases and accidents of parturition ...														
Heart diseases ...	12													
Accidents ...	4													
Convulsions ...														
Septicæmia ...	1													
All other causes ...	26	4	1	1	1	8	13	2	5	1	5	12	1	3
All causes ...	63	4	1	1	1	25	31	8	12	2	7	28	3	6

